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SUBJECT: Turkmenistan Responds to USOSCE Plans to Support OSCE
Border Assessment of Central Asian States

Ref: USOSCE 154

¶1. (U) Per reftel, post is providing comments, suggestions and points of contact regarding the scope, focal points, and proposed methodology for assessment of Turkmenistan's borders in conjunction with a general assessment of the five Central Asian states' borders.

¶2. (SBU) SCOPE: Post envisages an assessment inclusive of internal border station management among the 9-11 agencies represented at each border crossing point (BCP); cross-border communication; command and control capabilities and procedures along the border, at the BCPs, and from the border areas to the capital city, Ashgabat; sufficiency of personnel and resources to accomplish relevant tasks associated with securing the entire length of the border and operating the BCPs; overall training of officers working in border areas; inter-agency coordination at the local BCP, regional, and national levels; and the legislative framework for law enforcement and border security-related issues.

¶3. (SBU) METHODOLOGY: The assessment should coordinate strongly with international organizations, especially the European Union - Border Management Program in Central Asia (EUBOMCA) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that already operate in Turkmenistan and have a working relationship with the government. It is unlikely a previously unknown, outside group will inspire much confidence and openness with local interlocutors. Post recommends that an assessment team first meet in Ashgabat with diplomatic missions and international organizations working at the border and all of the agencies represented at the border stations prior to heading out to individual posts. An effective assessment will require official buy-in at the highest level before lower-level officials will feel comfortable sharing information. Any team should recognize the fact that most law enforcement information is considered a "state secret" and is not made available for public consumption. Post looks forward to supporting an assessment as a necessary and useful coordination step for regional work, but cautions against too much optimism on the part of implementers.

¶4. (SBU) FOCAL POINTS: The focal points have already been laid out in paragraph 2. The Government of Turkmenistan has shown an increased willingness to engage the international community with equipping the State Border Service (SBS), training SBS and State Customs Service officers, and constructing border-crossing checkpoints. The government has not shared a comprehensive border management strategy with the donor community, so training, equipping and construction has been sporadic and uncoordinated at a national

level. An assessment should highlight both areas of success and improvement, but also consider national inter-agency coordination and control.

15. (U) Points of contact:

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BRUSH